

**Seminar in U.S. History
Prof. David Greenberg
Rutgers University
Fall 2015**

Class Time: Wednesday 4.30-7:30
Email: davidgr@rutgers.edu
Office Hours: Mon. 10.00 a.m.-12 p.m.
Course No.: 16:510:571:01

Room: Van Dyck 011
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**Syllabus
[updated 8/10/2015]**

Description. This course seeks to introduce graduate students to the practice of conducting research in U.S. history and turning that research into written work. Students may choose a topic in any area they wish. The course and the readings emphasize the development of skills that students will need as professional scholars, including oral and written presentation, critiquing the work of others, and engaging in spontaneous debate about historical matters.

This seminar is relatively light on reading and heavy on research and writing. We proceed through various steps of research: choosing a topic; surveying and critiquing the literature; identifying useful primary sources; writing drafts; responding to criticisms; revising. I don't expect that everyone's term paper will be publishable, but I hope that some will be and that others will constitute viable drafts that can be made publishable with additional revision. Students may also choose to think of their final paper as a draft of a dissertation proposal.

The subject matter, U.S. history, serves primarily as an organizing theme for the class. To the extent we read about substantive historical debates, the focus will be on post-World War II American history, because that is my own area of expertise. But the course is meant for students in all fields.

Course Requirements.

- **Regular attendance.** This course meets only three hours a week. Arriving on time and staying for the duration are essential. Students may miss *one* class during the semester, no questions asked. Students who miss more than one class—or substantial portions of more than one class—will be penalized one third of a letter grade for each class missed, even if they notify the professor in advance. In case of severe illness or other extraordinary events, documentation must be provided. And to be clear: "Severe illness" does not refer to a bad cold or the flu. It refers to something like meningitis or a car accident.
- **Active participation.** One key purpose of a seminar like this is to teach students to form their own ideas and share them with their peers. The very work of the course consists of engaging in a discussion of ideas. Students who abstain from discussion are missing the course's whole purpose. A class in which a student doesn't contribute to discussion is equivalent to a missed class. *If you do not like to participate, this is probably not the right class for you.*
- **Reading.** You are expected to finish all of the assigned reading.

- **Writing Assignments.** The course requires a lot of writing, most of which will be in the service of your research paper. Some essays will be critiques of your peers' work. The assignments are as follows:

1. One-paragraph statement of topic. Due Sep. 9.
2. Bibliography. Any length. Due Sep. 16.
3. Comments on a peer's statement & bibliography. 2 pages. Due Sep. 23.
4. *Historiographic Essay. Not more than 10 pages. Due Sep. 30.
5. Comments on a peer's historiographic essay. 2 pages. Due Oct. 7.
6. One-page list of primary sources. Due Oct. 14.
7. Proposal, 3 pages. Due Oct. 21.
8. Comments on a peer's proposal. 2 pages. Due Oct. 28.
9. *Final paper. Not more than 20 pages. Due Dec. 9.

* Graded assignment.

The final paper will count the most. The historiographic essay will also be graded. The other assignments are required but will not assigned individual grades.

- **Presentation.** Each week, one student will give a 15-minute presentation on a different topic relevant to that week's subject. There are 11 topics in all. If the class has more than 11 students, there will be some weeks on which two students will presents. If the class has significantly fewer than 11 students, then each student will present twice.

Additional Rules and Information. Some of these rules should go without saying, especially for graduate students. Yet there are often one or two students who seems to need reminders.

- Cell phones and other devices must be turned off upon entering the classroom and may not be used in the classroom or during class time.
- Laptops may be used for note-taking only. No emailing or Web-surfing during class.
- Students must show up on time and stay for the duration of the class. During class, students should not engage in personal conversations, read newspapers, do crossword puzzles, or undertake other personal diversions unrelated to class activity.
- I will return all emails, usually on a first-come, first-served basis. But please do not assume that I have received your email. Sometimes it gets stuck in a spam folder. If I don't reply within 48 hours, please follow up with a phone call. If it's urgent, please call me.
- We will be using Sakai for the class. Go to <https://sakai.rutgers.edu/portal> and log in using your Rutgers ID and password. On the site I will post announcements, assignments, readings, and so on.

Academic Integrity.

Plagiarism and cheating are, of course, forbidden, according to Rutgers University policy. You are responsible for reviewing and obeying these policies. A lengthy statement of the policy is at <http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/>.

On plagiarism, this statement - see:

<http://history.rutgers.edu/component/content/article?id=109:statement-on-plagiarism>

- appears in Rutgers University's rules. Like all such rules, it applies to this class.

Plagiarism is the representation of the words or ideas of another as one's own in any academic exercise. To avoid plagiarism, every direct quotation must be identified by quotation marks or by appropriate indentation and must be promptly cited in the text or in a footnote. Acknowledgment is required when material from another source is stored in print, electronic, or other medium and is paraphrased or summarized in whole or in part in one's words. To acknowledge a paraphrase properly, one might state: "to paraphrase Plato's comment ..." and conclude with a footnote identifying the exact reference. A footnote acknowledging only a directly quoted statement does not suffice to notify the reader of any preceding or succeeding paraphrased material. Information which is common knowledge, such as names of leaders of prominent nations, basic scientific laws, etc., need not be footnoted; however, all facts or information obtained in reading or research that are not common knowledge among students in the course must be acknowledged. In addition to materials specifically cited in the text, only materials that contribute to one's general understanding of the subject may be acknowledged in the bibliography. Plagiarism can, in some cases, be a subtle issue. Any questions about what constitutes plagiarism should be discussed with the faculty member.

Weekly Assignments.

Articles and book chapters are available online on the class website at the Sakai site. There are no assigned books.

1: Sep. 2 Introduction

READINGS:

- <http://www.williamcronon.net/researching/questions.htm>

2: Sep. 9 Making Sense of Postwar America

DUE: One-paragraph statement of topic.

PRESENTATION #1: "How I chose my topic."

DISCUSSION: *1st half:* Contours of recent American history
2nd half: Your topics.

READINGS:

- Daniel Bell, "The Revolt Against Modernity," *The Public Interest*, 81 (Fall, 1985), pp. 42-63.
- William Chafe, "America Since 1945," in *The New American History*, 2nd ed., revised and expanded, ed. Eric Foner (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1997), pp. 159-177.
- Jonathan Rieder, "The Rise of the Silent Majority," in *The Rise and Fall of the New Deal Order*, Steve Fraser and Gary Gerstle, eds. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), pp. 243-268.
- Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., "After the Imperial Presidency," in *The Cycles of American History* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1986), pp. 277-336.

3: Sep. 16 The Art of the Review Essay

DUE: Bibliography of secondary sources.
PRESENTATION #2: "How I assembled my bibliography."
DISCUSSION: 1st half: Assembling the bibliography.
2nd half: Art of the review essay.

READINGS:

- Michael J. Heale, "The Sixties as History: A Review of the Political Historiography," *Reviews in American History* 33 (2005), pp. 133–152.
- Michael Kazin, "The Grass-Roots Right: New Histories of U.S. Conservatism in the Twentieth Century," *American Historical Review* 97: 1 (Feb., 1992), pp. 136-155.
- John Earl Haynes, "The Cold War Debate Continues: A Traditionalist View of Historical Writing on Domestic Communism and Anti-Communism," *Journal of Cold War Studies* 2:1 (Winter 2000), pp. 76–115.

4: Sep. 23 **NO CLASS**

DUE (electronically): Comments on someone else's one statement & bibliography.

5: Sep. 30

DUE: Historiographic Essay.
PRESENTATION #4: "What makes a good review essay."
DISCUSSION: 1st half: Readings
2nd half: Art of the review essay.

READINGS:

- Kenneth Cmiel, "The Recent History of Human Rights," *American Historical Review*, 109:1 (February, 2004), pp. 117-135.
- Roy Rosenzweig, "Wizards, Bureaucrats, Warriors, and Hackers: Writing the History of the Internet," *American Historical Review*, 103:5 (December, 1998), pp. 1530-1552.
- George Cotkin, "History's Moral Turn," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 69: 2 (April 2008), pp. 293-315.

6: Oct. 7 **Clashing Interpretations**

DUE: Comments on someone else's historiographic essay.
PRESENTATION #5: "How I decided a senior scholar was wrong."
DISCUSSION: Positioning oneself in a historiographical dispute.

READINGS:

- Rick Perlstein, "Who Owns the Sixties? The Opening of a Scholarly Generation Gap," *Lingua Franca* (May/June 1996), pp. 30-37. available at <http://linguafranca.mirror.theinfo.org/9605/sixties.html>
- Steven F. Lawson, "Debating the Civil Rights Movement: The View from the Nation," in Lawson & Payne, *Debating the Civil Rights Movement, 1945-1968*, 2nd ed., Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2006, pp. 3-46.
- Charles Payne, "Debating the Civil Rights Movement: The View from the Trenches," in Lawson & Payne, *Debating the Civil Rights Movement, 1945-1968*, 2nd ed., Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2006, pp. 115-155.

7: Oct. 14 Research Challenges I

DUE: **One-page list of primary sources.**

PRESENTATION #6: "How I found my primary sources."

DISCUSSION: Finding primary sources.

READINGS:

- Jacques Barzun and Henry Graff, "Finding the Facts," (Chapter 3), *The Modern Researcher*, 6th ed. Belmont, CA: Thomson-Wadsworth, 2004 [1957], pp. 37-66.
- Dobson & Ziemann, *Reading Primary Sources: The Interpretation of Texts from Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century History*. Routledge, 2009, Chapters 3 (letters), 6 (opinion polls), 7 (memoranda), and 11 (newspapers)
- Martha Howell & Prevenier, *From Reliable Sources: An Introduction to Historical Methods*. Cornell University Press, 2009, Chapters I, II (part B only), III.
- <http://www.williamcronon.net/researching/searching.htm>
- <http://www.williamcronon.net/researching/documents.htm>

8: Oct. 21 Research Challenges II: The Internet and Sources

DUE: **Proposal.**

PRESENTATION #7: "My research challenge."

DISCUSSION: *1st half:* Readings
2nd half: Proposals.

READINGS:

- Debra DeRuyver and Jennifer Evans, "Digital Junction," *American Quarterly*, 2006, pp. 943-974.
- Roy Rosenzweig and Daniel Cohen, *Digital History: A Guide to Gathering, Preserving, and Presenting the Past on the Web*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006, pp. 1-17.
- Heather Lee Miller, "Getting to the Source: The World Wide Web of Resources for Women's History," *Journal of Women's History*. 11: 3 (Autumn, 1999), pp. 176-187.
- Sandra Roff, "From the Field: A Case Study in Using Historical Periodical Databases to Revise Previous Research," *American Periodicals* 18:1 (2008), pp. 96-100.

9: Oct. 28 Narrative and Analysis

DUE: **Comments on someone else's proposal.**

PRESENTATION #8: "Why I Write—or Don't Write—in Narrative Form."

DISCUSSION: Narrative and analysis.

READINGS:

- Lawrence Stone, "The Revival of Narrative: Reflections on a New Old History," *Past and Present* 85 (November, 1979), pp. 3-24.
- James Goodman, "For the Love of Stories," *Reviews in American History* 26:1 (1998), pp. 255-274.
- James West Davidson, "The New Narrative History: How New? How Narrative?" *Reviews in American History*, 12:3 (September 1984), pp. 322-334.
- Hayden White, "The Question of Narrative in Contemporary Historical Theory," *History and Theory* 23:3 (1984), pp. 1-33.
- J. Morgan Kousser, "The Revivalism of Narrative," *Social Science History* 8:2 (Spring, 1984), pp. 133-149.

10: Nov. 4 **No Class/Individual meetings**

11: Nov. 11 **The Audience**

PRESENTATION #9: "A Work of Popular History I Like (or Hate)"

DISCUSSION: Who is your audience?

READINGS:

- Nicholas Lemann, "History Solo: Non-Academic Historians," *American Historical Review* 100:3 (June, 1995), pp. 788-798.
- William Leuchtenburg, "The Historian and the Public Realm," *American Historical Review* 97:1 (February, 1992), pp. 1-18.
- Sean Wilentz, "America Made Easy: McCullough, Adams, and the Decline of Popular History," *The New Republic*, July 2, 2001, pp. 35-40.
- David Greenberg, "That Barnes & Noble Dream," *Slate*, May 17 & 18, 2005.
<http://www.slate.com/id/2118854/entry/2118924/>

12: Nov. 18 **Writing Challenges**

PRESENTATION #10: "My writing challenge."

DISCUSSION: *1st half:* Writing well

2nd half: Progress reports.

READINGS:

- George Orwell, "Politics and the English Language," in *A Collection of Essays*. Harcourt, Brace, pp. 156-171.
- Theodor Adorno, "Morality and Style," in *Minimia Moralia: Reflections from a Damaged Life*, trans. E.F.N. Jephcott. London: New Left Books, 1974. available at tinyurl.com/63zkza
- Dinitia Smith, "Attacks on Scholars Include a Barbed Contest With Prizes," *New York Times*, February 27, 1999.
- Judith Butler, "A Bad Writer Bites Back," *New York Times*, March 20, 1999.
- James Miller, "Is Bad Writing Necessary? George Orwell, Theodor Adorno, and the Politics of Literature," *Lingua Franca* (Dec/Jan. 2000).
<http://linguafranca.mirror.theinfo.org/9912/writing.html>
- Jonathan Culler and Kevin Lamb, "Introduction: Dressing Up, Dressing Down," in *Just Being Difficult?: Academic Writing in the Public Arena*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003, pp. 1-15.
- Mark Warner, "Styles of Intellectual Publics," in *Just Being Difficult?*, pp. 106-125.
- Mark Bauerlein, "Bad Writing's Back," *Philosophy and Literature* 28 (2004), pp. 180-191.

13: Nov. 25 **No Class/Thanksgiving**

14: Dec. 2 **Work on Papers**

15: Dec. 9 **Was It Worth It?**

DUE:

Papers.

PRESENTATION #11: "Here's my paper. Can I go now?"

DISCUSSION: Papers.